



RESTING IN CHRIST: SELF-CARE FOR THOSE WHO SERVE



"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." - Matthew 11:28

Reflection

Those who serve the Church—pastoral staff, council members, and ministry volunteers—dedicate themselves generously to caring for others. Whether ministering to children, families, the sick, or the grieving, it is easy to become so focused on meeting the needs of others that we neglect our own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

In his encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, Pope Francis reminds us that the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the ultimate source of mercy, warmth, and quiet strength. Christ loves us "to the end" and invites us to bring our weariness to Him so that He can console and restore us. Jesus Himself modeled this balance throughout the Gospels, repeatedly withdrawing to quiet places to pray and rest in the Father's presence. Self-care is not selfish; it is a spiritual necessity that allows us to console and accompany others with authentic love and endurance.

As our Bishop reminds us, building our parishes into true **havens of hope and healing** requires that we support one another as collaborators in ministry. Healthy, sustainable service flows from a personal relationship with Christ and a supportive parish community. Through prayer, the sacraments, healthy boundaries, rest, professional clinician insights, and peer sharing, we protect our well-being so we can remain faithful **sanctuaries of pastoral care and companionship** for those we serve.

Every ministry can encourage a culture that values both generous service and healthy self-care.

Ministry Integration Examples

Consider how your ministry can foster a culture of health and sustainable service:

- **Youth Ministry:** Build intentional rhythms of prayer, reflection, and peer support into leader meetings and retreats, ensuring leaders do not serve from a place of depletion.
- **Marriage & Family Ministry:** Model healthy boundaries for families and volunteers alike, emphasizing that strong relationships require rest, time with God, and space for personal renewal.
- **Bereavement Ministry:** Offer structured debriefing and prayerful space for ministers to process difficult experiences, recognizing the emotional weight of accompanying those who grieve.
- **Parish Leadership & Staff:** Encourage open conversations about burnout, share pastoral resources, and foster a team culture where asking for support or taking time to rest is affirmed.

Discussion Questions

1. **Drawing from the Sacred Heart:** How can your ministry encourage leaders and volunteers to regularly bring their weariness to Christ and cultivate healthy rhythms of prayer, rest, and renewal?
2. **Collaborative Support:** In what ways can parish staff, council members, and volunteers better look out for one another and share the emotional and pastoral load of service?
3. **Sustainable Action:** What is one practical step your ministry can take this year to establish clear boundaries, reduce caregiver burnout, and foster a long-term culture of sustainable ministry?